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Repeats

▶ Prediction and Crime Clusters

Repetitive Victimization

▶ Repeat Victimization

Reputation Sanctions

▶ Naming and Shaming of Corporate Offenders

Residential Burglary

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Synonyms

Break-in; Breaking and entering; Domestic burglary; Home burglary

Overview

This entry reviews what is known about residential burglary. It discusses what burglary is according to legal definitions and survey questions, it enumerates sources of knowledge about residential burglary, and it presents findings about its incidence and about which burglaries are most likely to be reported to police. The entry also describes the characteristics of the neighborhoods, individual dwellings, victims, and items that are the targets of burglary and of the offenders who commit burglaries. Further, the temporal distribution of burglary and patterns of repeat burglary victimization are discussed. The entry ends with a section on the prevention of burglary.

Introduction

A residential burglary is committed when someone enters an inhabited dwelling without permission and with the intent to steal. Although during the past two decades burglary rates have gone down worldwide, burglary is still a common offense. Most people will become a burglary victim during their lifetime. Burglary is listed as a property offense, but for most victims, the illegal entry into their homes has greater impact than the material loss they suffer. Most victims report to the police. The available knowledge about burglary is derived from the police, from victims, and from offenders. Burglars offend in disadvantaged neighborhoods with poor social control. They prefer dwellings that are unoccupied and easily accessible, and they prefer small, valuable, and disposable items (like cash, electronic gadgets, and jewelry). Most burglars are young males who steal to sustain an expensive lifestyle, often including drug use. Juvenile burglars are more likely to co-offend than adult burglars. Many burglaries are repeat burglaries of the same or a nearby address. There is some evidence that situational crime prevention measures are effective in reducing burglary.

Definitions

Residential burglary is the actual or attempted illegal entry into a dwelling with the intent to steal. Definitions vary among law enforcement jurisdictions and among victimization surveys with respect to a variety of details, including whether the entry requires force or destruction and what constitutes a dwelling.

In the United States, the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program defines burglary as the unlawful entry of a structure used as a permanent dwelling to commit a felony or theft. They use three classifications in specifying burglary: forcible entry, unlawful entry where no force is used, and attempted forcible entry. In many jurisdictions, burglary also includes "distraction burglary," where falsehood, trick, or distraction is used on an occupant to gain access to the property. In many jurisdictions, gradations of burglary are distinguished depending on whether the offender was armed, whether co-offenders were involved, whether it took place at nighttime, and whether the property was occupied when entered.

The nature of the property entered may also play a role of the definition. Some countries exclude theft from a secondary residence or from an attic or basement in multi-dwelling buildings. Some countries include theft from a car (Aebi et al. 2006). Illegal entry and theft from structures not used as a dwelling, such as schools, offices, and shops, are burglaries, but they are not domestic or residential burglaries.

Because surveys have become influential sources of knowledge about burglary, it is important not only to consider legal definitions of burglary but also to understand how burglary is defined in survey questionnaires and to note the differences between these definitions. In the International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS), these questions are the following (van Dijk et al. 2008: Appendix 8, Q60 and Q65):

> Over the past five years, did anyone actually get into your home/residence without permission, and steal or try to steal something? I am not including here thefts from garages, sheds or lock-ups.

> Apart from this, over the past five years, do you have any evidence that someone tried to get into your home/residence unsuccessfully? For example, damage to locks, doors or windows or scratches around the lock?

The questions in the British Crime Survey (Nicholas et al. 2007, p. 75) are similar but refer to the last 12 months:

> During the last 12 months ... has anyone GOT INTO this house/flat without permission and STOLEN or TRIED TO STEAL anything?
>
> [Apart from anything you have already mentioned], in that time did anyone GET INTO your house/flat without permission and CAUSE DAMAGE?
>
> [Apart from anything you have already mentioned], in that time have you had any evidence that someone has TRIED to get in without permission to STEAL or to CAUSE DAMAGE?

Those in the US *National Crime Victimization Survey* (*NCVS*) refer to the 6 months that precede the interview. The main burglary question in the NCVS is:

> In the last 6 months, has anyone broken in or ATTEMPTED to break into your home by forcing a door or window, pushing past someone, jimmying a lock, cutting a screen, or entering through an open door or window?
>
> Based on the answers to subsequent follow-up questions (that also cover theft from garages, sheds and hotel rooms), and in line with the UCR classification, the *NCVS* distinguishes between completed burglaries (either "forcible entry" or "unlawful entry without force") and "attempted forcible entries."

Sources of Knowledge

The available knowledge of residential burglary stems from the criminal justice system, from victims, and from offenders. Agent-based computer simulation is a new approach.

Most countries collect and publish statistics on crime recorded by the police and other law enforcement agencies. The European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice compiles and harmonizes crime and justice data, including burglary statistics, from about 40 European countries (Aebi et al. 2006). In the United States, the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) are the major source of information at the federal level collected by law enforcement agencies.

The crime victimization survey was developed in the 1970s as an instrument to measure the "dark figure" of crime not reported to or not recorded by the police. In these surveys, a random sample of the population is asked to report their victimization experiences in the period before the survey. In the United States, the *National Crime Victimization Survey* started in 1972. A special methodological feature of the *NCVS* is that it employs a rotating panel design: households remain in the sample for, at most, seven interviews, a feature that affords longitudinal data, albeit over a relatively short period. Another distinctive feature is the use of the first interview as a "bounding interview" to minimize the telescoping effect, that is, the tendency of respondents to report that incidents are more recent than they actually are.

The International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS), which started in 1987, is the only standardized victimization survey that includes respondents from a large number of countries. There have been five main sweeps of the ICVS (1989, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004–2005). In the most recent sweep, 38 countries were represented, of which 30 relied on nationwide samples.

Offender accounts are the third source of information used to gain knowledge on burglary. Because the detection rate of burglary is universally low, offender accounts are not useful for estimating the size of the burglary problem. Rather, offender accounts help us understand why and how they commit burglaries. Most offender-based research on burglary has used accounts of detained offenders, but some have sought access to active offenders "out on the street" (Wright and Decker 1994).

Computer simulation, in particular agent-based modeling, is a relatively new approach to understanding phenomena related to burglary (Birks et al. 2012). In agent-based models of burglary, mathematically explicit behavioral theories are formulated by specifying behavioral

rules for autonomous "agents" (e.g., burglars, victims, and law enforcement officers). The system-wide implications of their actions (e.g., the burglary rate, the amount of repeat victimization, or the level of spatial clustering of burglaries) are studied and are compared to phenomena in the real world.

Incidence, Prevalence, and Trends

Victimization surveys are generally seen as the best available source for estimating the residential burglary rate. Three related measures have been used to determine burglary victimization quantitatively. *Prevalence* is the number of burglary victims as a percentage of the population, *incidence* (or the burglary rate) is the number of burglaries per person or household, and *concentration* is the number of burglaries per victim. The distinction is important because a substantial number of burglaries have been shown to be repeat burglaries at the same address within a relatively short span of time.

Burglary is a prevalent crime worldwide. For the industrialized countries that took part in the 2004–2005 ICVS, annually there were on average 4.4 completed or attempted burglaries per 100 households. With the exception of Mexico (8.8 burglaries per 100 households), the burglary rate tends to be highest in Anglo-Saxon countries, in particular England and Wales (7.9 %), New Zealand (7.8), the United States (7.5), and Australia (6.1). Countries with a low burglary rate are Japan, Spain, and the northern European countries of Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Germany.

In most countries for which data are available, the ICVS shows that the incidence and prevalence of burglary have been decreasing since the early 1990s (van Dijk et al. 2008, pp. 66–68). The ICVS findings on the long-term trend in burglary rates are supported by data from individual countries, such as the *NCVS* in the United States and the BCS in England and Wales, which may be more reliable because they are updated annually and survey a large within-country sample.

The burglary rate (incidence) in the United States has been decreasing steadily, from 11 burglaries per 100 households in 1973 to fewer than 3 in 2005. In England and Wales, the long-term trend since 1981 is not linear. From 1982 onward, the burglary rate steadily increased until it reached a peak in the early 1990s. Thereafter, however, from 1995 to 2005, the number of burglaries dropped by 59 % (Nicholas et al. 2007, p. 74).

It has been suggested that this continuing long-term decrease in residential burglary is caused by the increased use of antiburglary devices and measures, such as alarm systems, locks and bolts, and improved lighting (van Dijk et al. 2008). The evidence for this claim is reviewed in the section on prevention.

Reporting to the Police

Not all crime victims report to the police. The seriousness of an offense is the best predictor of whether a victim reports to the police (Goudriaan 2006). In the case of burglary, victims of burglary attempts are less likely to report to the police than are victims of completed burglaries, victims of completed burglaries are more likely to report if force was used to gain entry, and victims with (larger) monetary losses are more likely to report than those who lost nothing or little. The reasons victims retrospectively give about their motivations to report or not report to the police vary from perceived moral obligations ("crimes should be reported") to cost-benefit considerations ("to recover property," "to collect insurance").

Burglary reporting rates vary across countries. No less than 90 % of completed burglaries are reported in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Scotland. In the USA, the percentage is 77. The difference between the reporting rates of completed and attempted burglaries is remarkably constant: in most countries covered, completed burglaries are reported about twice as often as attempted burglaries (van Dijk et al. 2008, p. 114).

Targets

The burglary target selection process has been described as a spatially structured hierarchical

process, in which the offender first selects a geographic area that fits his or her purposes and subsequently targets a specific street and a specific property on the chosen street. Once the burglar is inside the property, the items to be stolen become the actual targets. Alternatively, in some cases, burglary is a relational offense, for example, when a former husband burglarizes the home of his ex-wife for retaliation, so that the victims rather than their possessions are the real targets. Consequently, a burglary can have multiple "targets." The present section reviews which characteristics of areas, individual premises, and victims are associated with burglary risk and what items tend to be stolen.

Areas

Urbanized areas have higher burglary rates than rural areas, and burglary rates are elevated in deprived areas, in ethnically mixed areas, and in areas with high residential turnover. The relationships between burglary risk and deprivation, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential turnover have been explained as the result of two very different mechanisms.

The first is that all three are associated with a lack of social control among residents. When social control (or social organization or collective efficacy) is lacking, residents are less likely to take notice of crimes taking place in their environment and, if they do, are less likely to intervene personally or call the police to stop it. Thus, where social control is lacking, burglars run lower risks of apprehension, and residents run higher risks of victimization.

The second reason is that most offenders themselves live in deprived, ethnically mixed, and unstable areas and usually offend within their own awareness spaces. Thus, these measures are largely synonymous to being nearby and exposed to concentrations of motivated offenders. This may explain the paradox that although offenders themselves claim that they select prosperous targets, the empirical evidence on actual targets is that burglary is concentrated in deprived areas. Apparently, offenders' preferences for prosperous targets are local preferences: they prefer the most prosperous targets within the (deprived) area they are familiar with. It has indeed been shown that visibly affluent households (e.g., detached and semidetached properties as opposed to terraced properties and flats) in the most deprived areas have the highest risks of burglary victimization.

Premises

A number of physical characteristics of residential units have been associated with burglary risk. Some of these apply to the location of the house or to the design of its immediate environment. Others apply to the structure of the unit itself. Proximity to major thoroughfares increases risk, and being located in a dead-end street or cul-de-sac decreases it, possibly because the former are more and the latter are less likely to become part of many offenders' awareness spaces. The findings are also compatible with a preference on the part of burglars for houses that allow for multiple exit routes. With respect to the units themselves, it has been shown that properties at the corner of a street block have larger burglary risks than properties in the middle of the block and that the burglary risk is elevated in detached and semidetached houses (as compared to terraced properties and flats), especially if they border playgrounds, woods, or other nonresidential area or if parts of the house are not visible from the street.

The three main property selection criteria that burglars use are surveillability, occupancy, and accessibility. Surveillability indicates whether properties can be overseen by other people. It is indicated by distance from the street, the absence of trees or hedges that block sightlines, and the presence of lighting. Occupancy is whether there are people at home. To the prospective burglar, it may be indicated by the presence of noise or light in the house, a car on the driveway, toys in the garden, or the absence of unopened mail. Accessibility indicates how easy it is to break into the property. Open doors and windows are a case in point, although they might also signal occupancy. Dogs and target-hardening devices, such as window locks and alarm systems, restrict accessibility.

Victims

The lifestyles of potential victims play a major role in their victimization risk. Because to commit their

offense burglars mostly depend on the times that residents are away from home, a major predictor of burglary victimization is the proportion of time a property is unoccupied. This proportion is directly related to the frequency with which residents go out in the evening and go shopping. It is indirectly related to the composition of the households – single-person households and single-parent families have higher risks – and with age, younger households have higher risks. Renters (as opposed to homeowners) and unemployed residents also have elevated burglary risks, but the reason is unlikely to be related directly to the proportion of time their houses are unoccupied.

Although the issue is not reported extensively in the literature, some results suggest that burglary is not always a crime directed against anonymous victims but one in which victims are targeted who are known to the offender. According to the 1998 British Crime Survey, 41 % of burglary victims were able to say something about the offenders. The offender was a complete stranger to the victims in only 49 % of these cases; in other cases, the offender was casually known (17 %) or even well known (34 %). While the 41 % of cases in which the victim was able to say something about the offender are probably not representative for all burglaries, it emphasizes that burglary offenders and victims quite often know each other. In some cases, for example, those in which a former spouse burglarizes his or her partner's home, it may be the victim who is the burglary target.

Items

If the victim is not the target of a burglary, the item to be stolen is the ultimate focus of acquisitive crime. What do burglars steal? Police records and victim surveys show that the most frequently stolen items are cash, jewelry, and portable electronic gear such as cell phones, cameras, audio and video equipment, computers, game consoles, and televisions. Most of these items are "hot products" that have attractive features for thieves in general and burglars in particular (i.e., they are concealable, removable, available, valuable, enjoyable, and disposable). Cash money is most burglars' favorite item.

Offenders

Burglary is a covert crime. Contemporary knowledge of it is hampered by the fact that the detection (clearance) rates of burglary tend to be low: 12.6 % in the United States in 2006 and generally below 10 % in cities with a population above 500,000, much like those of other covert crime. As a consequence, knowledge of offenders is based on interviews with those who have been arrested or sometimes on observations of and interviews with active burglars in natural settings.

When asked about motives or precipitating factors in the decision to commit a burglary, most offenders mention financial need. Often offenders are driven by the wish to continue a lifestyle they cannot afford without offending. In particular, the continued use of expensive drugs appears to motivate burglars. The influence of others further seems to trigger the involvement in burglaries, and some mention boredom and a need for thrills. Burglaries tend to be committed by young males. Of the burglars arrested in the United States, 86 % are male and half of them are younger than 22.

Among juvenile offenders, burglary tends to be a joint activity. The major reason for this appears to be social rather than practical, as the group setting induces potential offenders for various reasons to join a risky endeavor they would not get involved in on their own. For practical reasons, such as the possibility of carrying stolen items and the usefulness of having one offender act as a lookout, one would expect co-offending to be common in burglary. Offender accounts, however, suggest that adult offenders are solitary burglars most of the time, although one might question whether these accounts are always valid, as interviewed burglars tend to be very reluctant to talk about their accomplices.

Unlike popular images of the persistent burglar, burglary specialization is uncommon. Most offenders are highly versatile, and this appears to be true for burglars as well. There is no evidence that burglars will use violence only when they are unexpectedly confronted with victims or bystanders. Many offenders who commit burglaries also commit violent offenses.

Some authors have proposed a typology of burglars. Maguire and Bennett (1982) distinguish "high-level burglars," "middle-level burglars," and "low-level burglars," a typology that is confirmed by the offense styles described by Bennett and Wright (1984, pp. 43–49), who distinguish between "planners," "searchers," and "opportunists," respectively. Opportunistic offenses occur when a burglary opportunity presents itself and is immediately, without further planning, acted upon. The decision to burglarize, the selection of the target, and the burglary itself take place with little or no time gaps in between. In the searching offense, there is a time gap between the decision to commit a burglary and the selection of a target, but not between the target selection and the act of burglary; in other words, the searcher explicitly searches for a target and attacks when it is found. A planned burglary involves time gaps both between the decision to burglarize and the target selection and between the target selection and the actual burglary; thus, there is forethought and preparation before each phase. As these findings are based on accounts of arrested offenders and because it is possible that offense styles are related to the likelihood of apprehension, it is virtually impossible to estimate how these styles are distributed in the population.

Time

The risk of residential burglary varies across the hours of the day, across the days of the week, and across the weeks of the year. Because burglars tend to avoid confrontations with residents and prefer unoccupied targets, the exact timing of a burglary is often unknown; it is typically discovered when the residents find their place burglarized on returning home. The timing of burglaries is specified in police records using a time window that reflects when residents left their home and when they returned. According to the *NCVS*, in 28 % of the burglaries in the United States in 2005, the victims or the police had no idea what time of day the burglary was committed, although daytime burglaries (between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.) were slightly more common (53 %) than nighttime burglaries (47 %) in those cases whose timing was known. In England and Wales, 61 % of burglaries occur between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. (Budd 1999, p. 19). But the patterns display much larger variations, with the least likely burglary hours being those that most residents spend at home.

As about 30 % of burglaries occur during the weekend, from 6 p.m. on Friday evening to 6 a.m. on Monday morning (Budd 1999, p. 19), there is little evidence for a weekly time cycle in burglaries.

Like most types of crime, burglary appears to fluctuate systematically over the seasons of the year. In the United States, burglary rates peak during the summer months and are below average in winter. Interestingly, the pattern is reversed in England and Wales, which are also in the northern hemisphere but where burglaries peak in the winter, especially December and January.

Some, if not all, of the temporal variation in the timing of burglaries is induced by the time use of potential victims or guardians: burglaries usually take place when residents or housekeepers are away from home and sometimes when they are asleep. In addition, offenders themselves have routine activities, such as school or work, that may give rise to burglary opportunities during certain times of the day.

Another part of the (daily and seasonal) temporal variation is induced by burglars' preference to offend under the cover of darkness in order to minimize their risk of being seen and recognized and arrested. As a preference for darkness is not always compatible with a preference for unoccupied homes, burglars' preference for darkness may depend on attributes of the potential targets. For example, it has been found that in daylight, burglars select targets in upmarket low-density residential areas where residents are employed, whereas in darkness, they preferred to target dwellings in deprived high-density areas.

The act of burglary itself is typically short. According to burglar accounts, the majority of burglars spend less than 10 min in the dwelling they burgle.

Repeat Victimization and Risk Communication

Repeat burglary victimization occurs when a property is burglarized more than once within a specified period (e.g., a year). Many studies have demonstrated that prior burglary victimization is associated with an elevated risk of future burglary victimization (Johnson et al. 1997). Repeat burglaries tend to occur swiftly (Polvi et al. 1991) after the initial burglary. Often, revictimization takes place within days or weeks. After a short period, the risk declines rapidly until it reaches its original level. While the data, methodologies, and outcomes differ somewhat across studies, a characteristic exponential decay in the time course of repeat burglary victimization has been confirmed in many studies.

There are two explanations for these findings (Tseloni and Pease 2003). The first is that burglary victimization simply *flags* properties with lasting attributes that attract offenders. According to this explanation, both the initial burglary and the repeated burglary reflect the elevated risk associated with stable attributes of the target. The second mechanism is that the initial victimization *boosts* the likelihood of a repeat. Under this mechanism, the initial burglary alters something about the property or the victim that increases the risk of revictimization.

It has been argued that the temporal pattern of repeat burglaries in particular often suggests the involvement of the same offender or offender group in both offenses (Polvi et al. 1991). Indeed, the boost explanation is compatible with the possibility that a repeat offense against the same premise involves the same offender who committed the initial offense and who returns to collect items not stolen during the initial burglary or that have been replaced since then. On the other hand, in the wake of a burglary, one should expect victims to be extremely vigilant and maybe to install burglary prevention devices, which should logically decrease the risk of repeat victimization. The typical time course of repeat burglary supports the boost explanation of repeat victimization. In particular, it has been viewed as tentative evidence that in a typical repeat burglary, the perpetrators are the same people who were involved in the initial event. Although the exponential decay in the time course itself is not sufficient evidence for this claim, as it may also indicate unobserved risk heterogeneity (Townsley et al. 2000), there is also evidence from interviews and offender accounts that returning to a previously targeted property is a common burglar strategy, especially among prolific offenders.

In the wake of a burglary, properties near the targeted property run heightened burglary risks as well. The phenomenon was first locally established in Australia and England. The ubiquity of such "near repeats" has been demonstrated in no fewer than ten regions around the world (Johnson et al. 2007). Involvement of the same offenders who committed the initial burglary is also likely in near repeats. Near repeats could be displaced repeats, for example, if an offender returns to a previously burglarized property but finds it well secured and subsequently targets an alternative nearby property.

Prevention

What preventive measures have been taken to reduce burglary, and what is known about their effectiveness? Burglary prevention is not typically concerned with changing the attitudes of offenders, partly because efforts to change the delinquent attitudes and behavior of burglars cannot be very specific, as offenders are quite versatile. Another reason is that the burglary detection rate is so low that only a small minority is ever arrested and eligible for rehabilitation. Increases in the burglary detection rate may decrease the number of burglaries, as increased detection will translate into burglary's being perceived as a much more risky crime for offenders than before. Thus, although improving burglary detection cannot prevent the burglary that has been detected, it may deter the same and other offenders from committing future burglaries.

In this respect, new developments in DNA profiling are interesting, as DNA is most helpful in crimes that are the most difficult to detect. Although DNA samples currently make a relatively small contribution to all detections, they make a powerful contribution when they are available.

Most conventional preventive measures against burglary can be categorized as situational crime prevention, which include measures directed to change the immediate situation in which a burglary could potentially occur. Situational measures against burglary can be taken at various levels. First, target-hardening measures can be taken at the level of the individual property. Data on target-hardening measures of individual properties in the ICVS demonstrate that the penetration of burglar alarms and special door locks is higher in Anglo-American countries (England and Wales, Australia, United States, Canada, Scotland, Northern Ireland) than in Europe and Japan and that it is highest in England and Wales (van Dijk et al. 2008, pp. 135–139). Typically, at country level, the dissemination of target-hardening devices is more or less proportional to the burglary rate. For example, England and Wales and Australia have the highest burglary rates and the highest levels of installed target-hardening devices. The most likely explanation of this finding is that citizens respond to high burglary rates by trying to defend themselves against burglaries.

A considerable number of British householders have installed devices that strengthen the physical barriers against unlawful entry to their property, such as double locks or deadlocks (76 %), window locks (80 %), and security chains on doors (32 %). Further, many have taken measures that draw attention to illegal entries, such as outdoor (40 %) or indoor (24 %) sensor or timer lights and burglar alarm systems (29 %). These home security measures might appear to be a key defense against burglary victimization. Households with no home security measures were almost ten times more likely to have been burgled as households where there were simple security measures such as deadlocks on doors and window locks. Alarm systems only weakly differentiate between households that were victimized and those that were not. That simple security measures such as locks help to keep burglars out is also suggested by the fact that victimized households that experienced an attempted burglary were more likely to have double locks or deadlocks than those where entry was gained (Nicholas et al. 2007, p. 76). This is not the case with respect to alarm systems: an equal percentage of victims of completed burglaries and victims of attempted burglaries has an alarm system. If alarms are not effective, this might be due to their lack of specificity. In Charlotte, North Carolina, it was found that 98 % of alarm activations were false alarms (LeBeau and Vincent 1997).

The simple negative correlations between target-hardening measures and burglary risk may be spurious and may indicate that low-risk households (e.g., homeowners, high-income groups) invest more in burglary prevention than do high-risk households for reasons not directly related to the actual or perceived burglary risk (e.g., because the rich can better afford antiburglary devices or because homeowners can expect longer term benefits).

Some target-hardening measures apply to larger entities than individual premises. Alley-gating, for example, is a successful target-hardening measure that prevents unauthorized entry from the rear of properties of a block of houses. In general, the deterrent effects of individual (property-level) measures are stronger if these measures are also adopted in the wider community.

There is probably no government in the world that has invested as much in reducing burglary as England and Wales, starting with the Safer Cities project in 1988 and more specifically with the Reducing Burglary Initiative that started in 1999. As most of these initiatives are being constantly evaluated (many of them applying quasi-experimental designs with control groups and pre-intervention and post-intervention measurements), this has also generated a host of information on the effectiveness of various prevention methods.

A comprehensive evaluation of nearly 300 antiburglary schemes in England and Wales

(Ekblom et al. 1996, p. 41) found that a combination of target-hardening and community-oriented action (such as fostering Neighborhood Watch, property marking, raising burglary awareness among residents) worked best but that target hardening could also work alone. This is in line with other research on target-hardening interventions, which has concluded that whole-area target hardening can reduce local burglary rates in the short term if continuous publicity is heard or viewed by prospective offenders.

Independently of the prevention tactic chosen, publicity appears to increase the effects of prevention schemes. Apparently, this works because it informs and deters potential offenders from burgling in the area, although publicity may also sensitize potential victims and increase their vigilance. When publicity precedes the implementation, it often reduces burglary in the period before the actual intervention (this may actually undermine the proper evaluation of the effect of the intervention itself, however). It may also reduce crime in a larger geographic area than where the intervention is implemented, and it may prolong the benefits of the intervention.

In general, the largest burglary reductions are obtained by focusing on the areas or on the victims with the highest burglary risks. This explains part of the success of prevention schemes in England that were aimed at preventing repeat burglary victimization by varying means. The Kirkholt and the Huddersfield projects resulted in substantial burglary reductions through multitactic interventions, probably in part because they addressed people who had recently been victimized and thus sensitive to and aware of the emotional and material consequences.

Conclusion

While over the years there has been a lot of continuity in the literature, some important developments may be highlighted. The first is the worldwide drop in burglary. The debate on the causes of the drop is ongoing, but the drop itself cannot be mistaken.

The second development concerns the nature and comprehensiveness of information on burglary. In 1991, the *National Crime Victimization Survey* had been under way in the United States for nearly 20 years, the British Crime Survey had just started in 1982 and did not yet follow an annual cycle, and the International Crime Victimization Survey gained momentum only during the 1990s. Similar developments can be observed with respect to police-reported burglary. In the United States, the Uniform Crime Reports have been reported for decades, yet many other countries have lagged behind. The European Sourcebook is an example of a new initiative to collect and standardize information from various countries and to stimulate international comparison. Noteworthy are a number of authoritative studies based on offender accounts of burglary, either based on prison interviews (e.g., Rengert and Wasilchick 2000) or interviews with active burglars (e.g., Wright and Decker 1994).

A third development to be highlighted is the increasing salience of repeat burglary victimizations in the literature. The success of the repeat burglary prevention programs in the United Kingdom has shown that repeats can be prevented, thereby reducing overall burglary rates substantially. An emerging line of research generalizes repeat victimization by showing that risk of revictimization can be communicated to nearby dwellings.

Some issues require more research. One is the offender-victim nexus. It has been demonstrated repeatedly that offenders are disproportionately likely to be crime victims themselves; another question is whether offenders and victims in the same incident are strangers to each other. Although the issue has not been studied extensively, some findings suggest that quite often victims have an idea of who the offenders are. Ethnographic research shows that offenders quite often know who their victims are, as they tend to select them from a pool of acquaintances.

A second issue that requires more research is the effectiveness of situational crime prevention measures. Although it has been argued that

surveys demonstrate strong negative correlations between target-hardening and burglary risk and although trend analyses show that increasing levels of burglary prevention devices are aligned with decreasing burglary rates, the evidence has not always been compelling, and the findings stand in strong contrast to the accounts of offenders, who generally emphasize that target-hardening measures play a minor role in the selection of dwellings.

The detection of burglary should be a third research priority. Worldwide the detection rate of burglary is low and a concern to the police. Possibilities for burglary detection offered by contemporary detection methods and tools (such as DNA matching, CCTV surveillance) have not yet been systematically investigated. The low burglary detection rate should also concern investigators who base their findings on police data or on accounts of arrested burglars. If fewer than 10 % of the burglaries are detected, is there any guarantee that those arrested are representative of the total burglar population? DNA databases may help to solve this puzzle, not by increasing the detection rate but by providing evidence of the behavioral patterns (geographic, temporal, modus operandi) of those offenders who have never been arrested but whose DNA stains have been left at multiple burglary scenes. If the behavioral patterns of these burglars resemble those of arrested offenders, it would increase confidence in present findings that are based on arrested offenders only.

Related Entries

- ▶ Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
- ▶ Modus Operandi of Sex Offenders
- ▶ Near Repeats and Crime Forecasting
- ▶ Offender Decision Making and Behavioral Economics
- ▶ Routine Activities Approach
- ▶ Situational Crime Prevention
- ▶ US National Crime Victimization Survey

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